

FRANK READE



WEEKLY MAGAZINE.

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THE SUNKEN PIRATE OR, FRANK READE, JR., IN SEARCH OF A TREASURE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA.

By "NONAME".



The young inventor had a sharp hatchet, and made a blow at the eel holding Barney. The hatchet half severed one of its coils. The eel squirmed, and rearing its head made a blow at Frank.

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THE SUNKEN PIRATE;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr., in Search of a Treasure at the Bottom of the Sea.

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CHAPTER I.

THE NEW INVENTION.

"I have just finished the grandest work of my life!" declared Frank Reade, Jr., the distinguished young inventor, as he sat in his office one June morning.

"Ah!" exclaimed a visitor, who sat opposite him in a great chair. "I am glad to hear that, Mr. Reade. The News Grabber is bound to be at the front. Forty-eight pages and ten columns to a page. Best paper in the world, sir. Please to give me a description of your new invention and you shall have one full page with handsome illustrations. When Dick Boomer says that it's biz every time, you bet!"

"No," said the inventor, reaching forward and putting a hand upon the arm of the smart young pencil pusher. "I don't want anything of the kind. I want you to represent things just as they are. Understand?"

The young reporter twitched his short mustache nervously, and replied in a dreamy sort of way:

"When you see it in the News Grabber, sir, it's so!"

"Ah, but with a coloring not wholly its own and which do not like," said Frank. "Now I want you to promise

not to make me out as an inventorial Samson, or my submarine boat as a world destroyer, with tongues of flame, and withering breath, going about seeking what it may devour. Simply describe it as an ordinary, every-day submarine boat. Do you see?"

Dick Boomer bowed, and then lit a cigarette.

"I am consumed with pleasure at the honor you have accorded me of being the first to get a description of the new invention!" he said. "Trust to my honor, sir; I'll never abuse your confidence."

"That settles it, then," said Frank, with alacrity. "Come this way."

The young inventor arose, and, followed by the New York reporter, passed out into the yard of the great Reade shops, where all the famous inventions were made.

The housetops of Readestown could be seen extending up the hillside beyond. Many generations of the Reade family had made the town their home, and had given it its name.

Frank Reade, Jr., led the way into a high-roofed building. It was situated on the banks of a canal, which communicated with the river below, and that was navigable to the sea.

Here was a vast tank of water, and in this tank floated

the new invention, one destined to surprise the world, the famous submarine boat.

The Lance it was named, and truly; its rakish hull and long ram would seem to warrant the name.

The hull was not unlike the model of a government cruiser, set low in the water. A guard rail ran along a wide and spacious deck.

The cabin or main body of the craft rested upon this deck and was long and cylindrical in form. Upon each side were windows and doors of heaviest plate glass, protected by steel screens.

Forward was a small pilot house, with a searchlight of tremendous power. An upper deck there was, with guard railings and two domes rising from the cabin with windows and little recesses in which one could sit and see the world outside.

Two slender masts carried flags, and served to steady the craft. Such is the outward description of the Lance.

Dick Boomer was at once enthusiastic over the submarine boat.

"The model is superb," he declared. "You are certainly a great designer, Mr. Reade."

Frank was too modest to take note of this compliment.

"Come inside," he said. "You must get the best idea of the invention there."

"Certainly," cried the reporter. "I am anxious to know how you lower and raise the boat."

"Upon much the same principle as that of any submarine boat," replied Frank. "When I want to go down I simply sink her. When I want to rise, her air-chambers are simply cleared of water by pneumatic pressure."

They went aboard the submarine boat without further delay.

Frank led the way into the cabin.

This was sumptuously furnished, and was a little palace in itself. Everything that cultured taste and art could desire was embodied there.

Then they passed through the after-cabin, with its tier of small staterooms, and entered the dynamo-room.

Here was all the wonderful electrical machinery which controlled the boat, and by means of which it could travel at a fast rate through the water.

Then Frank took the young reporter through the air-chambers, which were employed in the sinking and raising of the craft.

"This is all very clear, though most wonderful so far!" said Dick Boomer; "but will you please explain how you manage to breathe while under the surface. Of course the boat is supposed to be watertight."

"Certainly," replied Frank. "I think I can very quickly do that."

He opened a small door in a section of the hollow shell-like hull.

A number of pipes horizontally placed were seen.

"If you will notice," said Frank in explanation, "these pipes all connect with a tank and generator in the corner there. That generator holds sufficient condensed air to supply this boat for weeks under water."

"Upon each side of the cabin, and, indeed, every living room on board, there are small gratings at intervals, with valves.

"As the good air is drawn from the generator through these valves, a ventilator overhead draws it away in vitiated form, and by undergoing a chemical exposure, it is again purified, divested of its poisonous gases and used over again. There is not the slightest danger of the arrangement getting out of order, or of there being a lack of good air in the boat."

"Wonderful!" cried Dick Boomer. "It required some skill to put that arrangement all together!"

"Every man to his trade," replied Frank, with a smile. "Now, allow me to show you something else."

The young inventor opened another door which led into a small closet.

Here, hung against the wall, were a number of curiously looking helmets and paraphernalia much like that of a diver.

"Diving suits!" said Dick Boomer, making an entry in his note-book.

"Yes," replied Frank.

"What do you need those for?"

"Need you ask so simple a question? To leave the boat while at the bottom of the sea."

"Great Scott!" gasped Dick. "You don't mean to say that you will dare go out of the boat while she is under water?"

"Of course."

"But the terrible pressure——"

"Ah, that might trouble us at too great a depth. But we should use caution."

"Of course. Are these like the regular diving suits?"

"On the contrary, they are entirely different," replied Frank.

"Please explain."

"You will notice that the wearer must carry upon his back a knapsack. Well, that is really a small air generator and keeps the diver alive for hours under water."

"Moreover, the air is purer than that depended upon by the diver who has to have it pumped down to him through

pipe. Its circulation is more regular also, and certain." "Grand!" exclaimed Dick.

"Here is another advantage. Upon the helmet top you will see this small electric lamp. It is fed by a battery, and capable of a very strong light."

"By Jove! I would like to try a ramble at the bottom of the sea with one of these suits on myself," declared Dick.

"Perhaps you will have the opportunity some time," said Frank.

"Do you mean it?" cried the young reporter, with alacrity.

"I make no promises."

"That is equivalent to hope. I thank you, Mr. Reade. But pray explain me one more thing."

"Well?"

"How do you manage to leave the boat while it is under water without the water rushing in and overwhelming you?"

"Come this way."

Frank led the way forward.

In going thither they passed through the galley where the cooking was done. This was neat and well ordered.

Then Frank opened a steel door which opened into a vestibule. An outer door led out upon the deck.

There was a coil of rope in the vestibule and a valve. Frank indicated this and said:

"We will suppose ourselves at the bottom of the sea. This door is open into the cabin and the vestibule is filled with air. We have our diving suits on, and stepping into the vestibule we close the door behind us. Then we turn this valve and the vestibule fills with water. By opening the outer door we can safely walk out into the ocean."

"And to come back?"

"Simply enter the vestibule, close the door and press this key. The water is in a few seconds pumped out of the vestibule. Then you may safely enter the cabin."

Dick Boomer was busy for some moments with his notebook.

Then they passed out on deck.

As they did so loud voices were heard.

"Look out dar, I'ish! Don' yo' step on mah toes! Dat ain't a fair hold."

"Begorra, yez ace av spades, av I don't have me roights, however am I goin' to throw ye down?"

"Huh! I reckon if dar was an umpire yer, yo'd have ter play fair."

"Yez kin have one if yez want. Luk out thar, yez black monkey!"

Two comical-looking characters were on the deck, en-

gaged in a wrestling match. Each was tightly locked in the other's embrace and was straining every nerve.

One was a darky black as coal and stumpy in frame; the other was an Irishman, with a shock of red hair and a comical mug.

"Barney and Pomp!" explained Dick Boomer. "They are your traveling companions of whom I have heard so much, Mr. Reade?"

"Yes," replied the young inventor, "and the rascals are always up to some skylarking scrape or other. One is constantly nagging the other. Yet they are the best of friends."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed Dick. "The darky has him foul!"

"Whurroo! that's not roight. Yez are not playin' fair!" shouted the Irishman.

"Don' yo' be so suah, I'ish. Yo' don' know de tricks ob wrestlin'. Hi, dar! youse gwine ter go!"

Sure enough, Barney did go down like a flash. He was up again quick enough, but the fall was fairly Pomp's.

The Celt dashed in for another bout, and it was hard to say how long the contest might have waged had not both at that moment chanced to see Frank Reade, Jr., and his companion.

CHAPTER II.

THE STORY OF THE SUNKEN TREASURE.

The effect was comical.

Both instantly ceased their efforts and stood in a crest-fallen attitude. Frank smiled ironically and said:

"Up to your old tricks, aren't you?"

"Shure, sor, the paygur begun it," exploded Barney.

"Don' yo' beliebe dat I'ish mucker!" cried Pomp. "He never did tell de troof."

"Both of you need a reprimand," said Frank, sternly. "But come here and allow me to introduce you to Mr. Dick Boomer."

Both came forward and shook hands with the reporter.

This was meat for genial Dick, who elicited many a witty remark or comical joke from them.

After some conversation Frank said:

"Now, Barney and Pomp, I want you to be ready and to have things shipshape on board the Lance to sail next Thursday."

"All roight, sor," replied Barney, bowing low.

"We'll do dat, sah," said Pomp.

Then Frank and Dick Boomer went back to the office.

Arrived there, a serious expression dwelt upon the young reporter's face.

"I will not ask for much more of your valuable time, Mr. Reade," he said; "but will you tell me what part of the world you intend to go to?"

"Certainly," replied Frank; "I am going to explore the bed of the Caribbean Sea."

"Wonderful!" said Dick, with enthusiasm. "You will have a rare treat. There must be much of interest in those waters."

"There is no doubt of that," replied Frank; "but I have a particular mission."

"Ah!"

The young inventor opened a drawer in his desk and took out a weather-stained volume. He opened it, and the pages were seen to be covered with coarse chirography.

"It is the log of the ship Ventura," he said. "She plied in the West India trade in the latter part of the eighteenth century. I will not attempt to read it to you in full, but simply this page."

Frank turned the page over and then read as follows:

"To-day fought the Diablo, the famous and dreaded pirate ship, commanded by Red Jose Romero. Our crew were much frightened when the dreaded pirate gave us chase. It is lucky that we have four guns. The pirate probably does not suspect that fact, else he might not venture to attack us. I hope to punish the fiend, if my men will only stand to their posts.

"Entered at six bells,

"ABEL BENTON, Captain."

"Eight bells.—The Diablo is now off the quarter and has fired across our bow. We shall lay to, and when near enough we shall give her a full broadside.

"Later.—We have fought the Diablo at short range, and she is sinking. Her captain, Jose Romero, is dead, and half her crew. Four of them are prisoners. One of the prisoners asserts that there are millions in gold aboard the craft, and beseeches us to try and save it. But it is too late. She has taken her final plunge.

"Made soundings, and find water full forty fathoms. No chance to ever recover treasure. Latitude 15 degrees 2 minutes east of Cape Gracia a' Dios, longitude 3 degrees 4 minutes 15 seconds west of Washington.

"ABEL BENTON, Captain."

Dick Boomer's face scarcely moved a muscle during the reading of the log.

Then he drew a deep breath.

"That was nearly a century ago."

"Yes," replied Frank.

"Do you think that you can locate the treasure?"

"Why not?"

"Of course you can with your submarine boat. By Jove, what an expedition!"

He arose and crossed the room.

Then he advanced and placing his hands upon the table looked at Frank keenly.

"Mr. Reade, there is no earthly reason why you should grant me a favor, and especially so large a one as I ask. But I am going to ask it just the same."

"Well?"

"I know you will refuse it."

"Perhaps not."

"Well, will you take me with you on your submarine voyage? I will be your slave if you will."

Frank was astonished.

For a moment he hardly knew what to say. When he finally found words he answered:

"Why should I grant your request? I have refused thousand."

"There is no reason," said Dick, hopelessly. "I suppose I would be an incumbrance, anyway. But, just the same, I would like to go."

Frank looked keenly at the young reporter.

Truly, he told himself, there was no reason why he should take Dick Boomer aboard the Lance any more than any of the other legion of applicants.

But he had become suddenly interested in the young reporter.

He had at least the merit of originality. Perhaps he would become of service on the trip. The impulse was upon Frank.

But he did not at once commit himself.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, friend Boomer," he said.

"What?" gasped the young reporter, eagerly.

"I will take your case under advisement, and I will let you know."

"I could not ask for more," replied Dick, joyfully. "Oh I hope you will never be sorry."

"I hope not," said Frank, with a laugh.

And thus the interview ended.

The news spread over the country that Frank Reade, Jr. was going in quest of the sunken pirate, and try to recover the treasure at the bottom of the sea.

Barney and Pomp, who had traveled with their master in many lands, were overjoyed.

Nothing suited them better than wild adventures, and the present projected enterprise seemed to promise enough of that.

Those were busy days in Readestown, preparing for the start.

Great crowds of sightseers applied at the gate of the shops and wanted to examine the submarine boat.

But Frank was obliged to refuse them all.

The days passed quickly enough. At length Wednesday came, the day before the start.

Frank was very busy in the shops, when a card was brought him.

In his haste he merely glanced at it and said :

"Tell the gentleman, Barney, that I cannot see him. I am too busy."

"If yez plaze, sor," said Barney, "he says that ye must see him."

Frank glanced again at the card. The peculiarity of the name attracted him.

"Senor Jose Romero,
Belize, British Honduras."

"Why, that is queer," muttered Frank. "That is the name of the former pirate captain of the *Diablo*."

For an instant it occurred to Frank that possibly the pirate himself had come in person to protest against the undertaking.

But this was, of course, absurd, for Red Romero had been dead for nigh a century, and his ship sunk for that length of time.

Yet he was curiously impressed.

"It is queer," he muttered. "I think I'll see the fellow."

So he dropped his tools and went at once into the office.

As he entered a man arose from a chair by the door. His appearance was most striking.

He was tall and marvelously well built, with powerful chest, dark type of features and long, black beard.

He wore the Spanish costume, and did not address Frank in English.

Fortunately the young inventor was well familiar with Spanish.

"Senor Reade, I am captain of the schooner *Manola*," said the Spaniard in his smooth way. "I am also a descendant of the pirate, Jose Romero the Red."

"Ah!" said Frank, deeply impressed. "I am glad to meet you, señor."

But the other's reciprocation of this greeting was not warm.

"I read in the papers that you intend to visit the wreck of the *Diablo* and recover the treasure."

"Yes," replied Frank; "that is my intention."

"You must not do that."

"What?"

"You have no right, señor. That gold belongs to me. I am the lawful heir of my grandfather, Romero the Red."

The young inventor was so astonished that he hardly knew what to say.

"The deuce you say!" he exclaimed. "You have no more right to that gold than I have, señor."

The other's eyes blazed.

"It is mine!" he hissed. "You must not touch it!"

"But you could not recover it," said Frank.

"Si, señor; I have divers who are ready to go down. I warn you that I shall defend my own. The gold is mine!"

Frank was silent a moment.

He was not a little angry at the cool assurance of the fellow. He assumed much dignity, and replied:

"I do not recognize your right. I warn you not to interfere with me or it will be the worse for you. Have you anything else to say?"

"Yes," replied the Spaniard, angrily. "I am the true heir to the fortune, and you shall not wrest it from me."

"Pshaw! It was not even the property of Romero the Red. He stole it."

"Ha! Do not traduce my ancestor. He gained it by lawful strife! But enough! You shall see me again, if you do not desist in your purpose."

With a profound bow, Senor Jose Romero left the office.

For some time after his departure Frank was hardly able to collect his scattered senses.

"Upon my word," he muttered; "that fellow is a victim of the queerest philosophy I ever heard of. Perhaps he really means to make us trouble. I cannot see how he can do it, though."

Then Frank went back to work.

The submarine boat was now all thoroughly fitted out.

There remained nothing to be done but to get aboard and sail out of the canal into the river.

Satisfied of this, Frank at once went down to the telegraph office and sent the following dispatch:

"To RICHARD BOOMER Office of the News Grabber, New York City:

"Come by first train. Must be ready to start Thursday sure. Will be glad to see you. FRANK READE, JR."

Thursday came, and the morning train brought the young reporter from New York. He was all enthusiasm and excitement.

"You don't know how overjoyed I was to get your call," he said. "Be assured, Mr. Reade. I will try and see that you are not sorry."

The party now went aboard the Lance. At exactly seven o'clock the gates were opened into the canal.

Frank Reade, Jr., started the electric machinery, and she glided out of the tank.

Out into the canal and down between the cheering crowds she went. Soon she was in the river, and later the city of Readestown faded from view.

The Lance had begun her thrilling and most eventful journey.

CHAPTER III.

A DIVING TOUR.

Let us now transfer the reader to the isle studded waters of the Caribbean Sea.

The submarine boat had made a rapid and successful trip, unattended by any event of a thrilling sort.

The party were all in high spirits, and when one day Frank announced that they were in the Gulf of Honduras all felt like giving a little cheer.

A day's rapid sail would now bring them to the spot where the sunken pirate was to be looked for.

Frank had called to remembrance many times his exciting interview with the Spaniard Jose Romero.

Did the Spaniard really mean to carry out his threat? Would he really prevent them from rescuing the treasure?

Frank smiled grimly.

He had not the slightest idea of abandoning his purpose. Certainly no such idle threat should deter him.

Dick Boomer was in high spirits and entranced with the life on board the Lance.

"If I could have my desire," he said. "I would ask for no greater realization of Heaven than to always live on board this boat."

Everybody laughed at this, but Dick was in earnest.

Barney and Pomp were the same jovial, rollicking chaps as ever.

They were prompt in their duties, and invaluable in their respective positions, but as full of deviltry and practical jokes as a nut is of wholesome meat.

Across the Bay of Honduras the Lance sped.

Thus far Frank had made no effort to do any submarine exploring.

But just before sighting Cape Graciosa a' Dios Dick Boomer pointed to a coral reef and cried:

"I am dying with curiosity to see how the ocean looks under a reef like that."

"Are you?" said Frank. "Very well, we will try it."

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

"Good!" cried Dick, with delight.

All scampered into the cabin.

Frank followed and touched an electric button, which caused all the doors in the boat to close hermetically.

Then he opened the pneumatic valve, and the water rushed into the chamber, compressing the air into a cylinder beyond, which recorded on a dial the exact quantity of water in the chamber.

Instantly the Lance sank.

Down she settled quickly, until she touched the bottom.

Then Frank touched an electric button, and all the shutters before the plate glass windows fell back.

A flood of electric light illumined the ocean depths about.

It was a marvelous and magical scene which lay before the gaze of the voyagers.

They were resting upon a bank of white sand as pure and clean as could be imagined.

In the sand were shells of rare shapes and beautiful hues. Coral reefs and formations hemmed the spot in.

And now from cavernous depths and recesses all manner of curious fish swam forth. They were of all sizes and shapes.

Dick Boomer was deeply impressed with the scene. He could not help many excited exclamations.

"By Jove! if I was to write a hundred columns, I could never do justice to this!" he cried.

"Begorra! wud yez luk at that queer fish!" cried Barney. "Phwativer wud yez be afther callin' it?"

That was hard to say. The fish in question was a cross between a sculpin and a sunfish, though of immense size.

It swam straight up to the submarine boat and seemed disposed to swim right in, but the heavy plate glass prevented.

"I can hardly realize that we are under water," said Dick. "Indeed, it seems as if we could easily walk out there among the coral trees."

"And so indeed we can," replied Frank Reade, Jr. "But we will need air to breathe, just the same."

Dick Boomer turned with a joyful cry.

"What is that? Do you really mean that we can put on the diving suits?"

"We will try them if you wish," said Frank.

Dick was overjoyed. He could hardly restrain his jubilant feelings. Barney and Pomp looked envious, and seeing this, Frank said:

"One must stay and guard the boat. I think you had better do that, Pomp."

"Whurroo!" cried Barney, jubilantly. "Shure, it's a foine toime we'll have!"

Pomp was somewhat dejected, but he was too sensible to long yield to it. The diving suits were brought out.

Dick Boomer was assisted into his and the generator set to work. The reporter was in high spirits.

Then Barney and Frank donned their suits, and all was announced in readiness.

Pomp had been carefully instructed to look after matters aboard the Lance. Also he was to work the searchlight, and in answer to signals given by Frank, keep the party in view as long as possible.

Then the submarine explorers entered the vestibule.

They closed the door leading into the cabin and stood with their helmets down. Frank made a signal to be ready.

Then he touched the valve, which allowed water to flow into the vestibule. In a few moments it was full.

Then Frank opened the outer door and the three divers walked out into the ocean depths. It was Dick Boomer's first experience, and for a short while affected him queerly.

He was for some little time at a loss just how to maintain his equilibrium in the swelling motion of the sea.

But he finally overcame the feeling of uncertainty, and walked along slowly with Frank and Barney.

The submarine boat lay behind them, all lit up. Pomp sent the rays of the searchlight deep among the reefs.

The myriads of fish scampered away in terror at their approach. They darted into little recesses in the reef, or into dark depths overhead.

The formation of the coral was something wonderful.

It extended in a long, irregular ridge for some ways, and then was broken up into a literal coral forest.

There were tall trees, stumps, and clumps of shrubbery, all quite realistic. What was more, the colors were varied and beautiful beyond description.

Dick Boomer could hardly contain himself, so excited was he.

Of course he could not talk much, for a conversation could be carried on only with the greatest of difficulty. This was done by placing the helmets together and shouting very loud.

The three divers wandered on deeper and deeper among the coral forest.

Then the first mishap occurred. As it happened, Barney was the victim.

The Celt had been closely examining a formation of reef, when suddenly from the black waters above a huge body descended upon him.

Barney had just time to see the slimy, snake-like coils envelop him, and feel a pressure like that of a boa-constrictor.

Both Dick and Frank Reade, Jr., saw the thrilling danger of the Celt at that moment.

It seemed as if the veritable type of a sea-serpent had Barney in its folds. But Frank at once recognized the assailant as a huge eel.

The monster was full fifteen feet in length and of huge dimensions. Why it had wound itself around Barney was not clear, for the eel did not seem to have done so with the purpose of making a meal upon him.

But it tightened its coils and threatened to burst the rubber casings of the Celt's diving suit.

This would have been certain death. Nothing could have saved him.

Barney struggled desperately to get out of the folds of the eel. But it was like pitting the strength of a child against that of a giant.

The eel simply tightened its grip and threw Barney so that both were in a squirming mass in the sands. At this juncture Frank Reade, Jr., came to the rescue.

The young inventor had a sharp hatchet, and made a blow at the eel.

The hatchet had severed one of its coils. The eel squirmed, and rearing its head, made a blow at Frank.

The head struck the young inventor full in the breast, and he was knocked off his feet.

But Dick Boomer was also coming to Barney's assistance.

The young reporter made a slash at the eel with his knife. Again the monster received a fearful gash.

This began to tell. The eel thrashed about terribly, and Barney nearly had the senses bumped out of him.

But the Celt had managed to free one arm and get hold of a knife. He at once slashed at the powerful folds.

This was with good effect also, as the powerful fold was completely severed, and the eel in two sections lay writhing and twisting in the sand.

Barney scrambled to his feet and hastily got out of the way of the squirming monster. It had been a narrow escape for him.

But beyond a slight jarring and a few bruises he was uninjured.

Frank drew nearer and placing his helmet close to that of Barney, shouted:

"Are you all right?"

"Yis, sor," replied the Celt. "Shure, I'm as good as two dead min yit."

Frank smiled at this characteristic reply of the Irishman, and cried:

"Keep closely by us. I am going beyond the ridge yonder."

This was a section of the reef which rose steep and high and jutted off at right angles. Beyond this all was darkness.

The rays of the searchlight could not penetrate there.

Frank led the way. Soon they rounded the angle in the reef. Of course their helmet lights were of some avail now.

But they were no longer in the steely glare of the searchlight. However, they kept on fearlessly.

Frank took a course which he fancied would lead him up the side of the reef. His purpose was to try and find his way up to that part of the reef which was above the surface.

It would be a novel experience to thus climb up out of the ocean depths into daylight and then return.

Barney and Dick followed.

But after climbing some distance upward Frank came to a broad expanse, which seemed a very bed of coral, so compact that it could be easily walked upon.

The reef seemed here to terminate. Frank realized that he had not struck the right part of it.

But he was not disposed to turn back. That was never his disposition.

He kept on across the coral plateau without hesitation. His purpose now was to surely locate that part of the reef which rose to the surface.

They were walking in single file. Barney was in the rear. Some distance had been traversed when Frank came to a halt and turned around.

His purpose had been to make sure that his companions were following him.

Dick Boomer was close behind him, but Barney was not to be seen. The two divers waited for him to come up. Several moments passed and he did not appear.

A chill struck Frank Reade, Jr.

CHAPTER IV.

BURIED UNDER THE SEA.

What did it mean?

Why did not the Celt appear? Had harm come to him? Why was he missing?

These questions flashed with lightning rapidity through Frank Reade, Jr.'s brain.

He put his helmet to Dick's, and shouted:

"Where is Barney?"

"I do not know," replied the young reporter.

"Where did you see him last?"

"He was right behind me coming up on this plateau."

"That is very queer."

"Yes."

"Can anything have happened to him?"

"I do not know. Shall we not go back and see?"

"I think we had better."

With the worst of apprehensions they turned back. They had not far to go when these were verified.

In the coral surface of the plateau there yawned a cavernous hole. A section of the plateau had given way, and Barney had gone down into unknown depths.

Frank and Dick Boomer gazed at each other in horror.

The young inventor leaned over the aperture and looked down; but he could see nothing.

Of course it was impossible to shout or make any noise that Barney might hear. Frank was overwhelmed with an awful fear that Barney had gone to his death.

He placed his helmet close to Dick's and shouted:

"I fear that is the end of him."

"Don't say that. Is there no way we can rescue him?"

Frank, by way of reply, unwound from about his waist a rope of flexible steel wire, and which he had designed for use under water.

He made a noose and passed it under his arms. Then again he spoke through his helmet.

"I will go down there. Just lower me carefully, will you?"

Dick Boomer, of course, would not refuse. He took the other end of the rope and braced his heels in the coral formation of the plateau.

Frank slid over the edge, and Dick began to pay out on the rope. Down into the depths the young inventor slid.

As he went down, his electric helmet lamp illumined the place.

He saw that the whole plateau was but a hollow shell, and that the bottom of the ocean was far below.

He was trying to pierce the gloom below, hoping to get a sight of Barney, when a thrilling thing happened.

The rope slipped. He felt it give way above, and he fell. Down he went through the swelling waters.

He struck a hard surface, rolled over and over, and was for a moment stunned.

When he recovered and attempted to rise, a star of light shone before his eyes. It was the lamp in Dick Boomer's helmet.

The truth was that as the young reporter was bracing in the coral formation above to hold Frank's weight, a section gave way.

The result was that he was whisked from his feet like a puppet and went down after Frank into the depths.

Neither was hurt, though they were a trifle stunned and confused.

They regained their feet as quickly as possible and faced

each other. Then they looked about. But beyond the radius of the helmet lights all was inky blackness.

"Well," shouted Frank, as soon as he recovered. "Where are we, Dick?"

"Mercy knows!" replied the young reporter. "I don't!"

"It looks as if we were in a rather tight place to get out of!"

"Yes; maybe the center of the earth. But where is Barney?"

The question was answered in that moment. A star of light appeared through the gloom, and then the outlines of the Celt's form were seen.

At sight of his companions he came up eagerly.

Placing his helmet close to both of the others, Barney shouted:

"Phwere the devil are we?"

"Heavens!" cried Frank; "did you fall into this place?"

"Shure an' I did!"

"We thought you were killed!"

"Devil a bit, though I thought me ind had cum fer shure. Howiver did yez git here?"

"We fell also."

"Murther! We're kilt intoirely, thin."

"How is that?"

"Shure, there's devil a chance to git out av this hole!"

"Why?"

"Begorra, there's a wall all the way around it. We're in some koind av a pit at the bottom av the say, I take it."

It needed no further research or explanation to satisfy Frank Reade, Jr., that this was so.

They had fallen into one of the many coral cells which honeycombed the reefs. Walls perhaps half a hundred feet thick were upon all sides.

Certainly the situation looked like a desperate one.

What was to be done?

To attempt to return the way they had come was out of the question. It was fully fifty feet or more to the aperture above, and no way of getting up there.

The three divers stood for some moments in a dazed state. Frank Reade, Jr., was the first to recover.

The young inventor was never the one to surrender to circumstances so long as resistance could be made. Ever fertile in expedients, he was disposed to try them.

"Have you been all around the chamber?" he asked of Barney.

"Shure, sor, I have."

"And you can find no outlet?"

"Devil a bit!"

"Great heavens!" groaned Dick; "we are entombed alive!"

"No," said Frank, resolutely. "We must get out of here!"

"But how?"

"If we can do no better we must tunnel our way out."

"Before you could do that, our oxygen generators would run out of chemicals."

This was an awful reflection. But yet Frank would not yield.

"We will try!" he said, resolutely. "This coral will cut easily, and you have good sharp axes."

First, however, Frank was bound to confirm the truth of Barney's declaration.

He made a thorough and careful examination of the walls of the coral cell. It was several hundred square feet in area, and the walls upon all sides had not even a crack in them.

The question now was where to begin work.

Of course it would be proper to begin where the wall was the thinnest. But this it was not easy to tell.

Had it been in the open air, this could have been done by rapping and trusting to the ear.

But under water this was wholly out of the question.

So Frank went to work at random.

He selected what he believed was the most favorable spot. Then work began. Frank and Barney wielded the axes, and Dick cleared away the debris.

Working under water is not as expeditious work as working in the open air.

The water offers vastly more resistance to the swing of the axes. Again, the three divers had to take the most extreme care that no harm was done their suits.

A flying bit of coral, or a falling section might puncture the rubber and let the water in. This would be death.

But just the same they made wonderful progress.

In a very short space of time they had dug fully twenty feet into the soft mass of coral. But deliverance yet was very indefinite.

For aught they knew the wall might be two hundred feet thick. It was all a question of the lasting of the chemicals in the generators.

Thus far they did not seem to evince any disposition to give out. But yet this was not conclusive.

When they should give out, it would be all at once, and the trio would be corpses in a brief space.

So it may be understood with what determination they worked. And every moment the tunnel grew deeper.

And just when the strength of the plucky divers seemed

about to give out, the wall before them crumbled and a flood of light burst in upon them.

It was the glare of the Lance's searchlight. Overcome, the three divers sank down for a few moments' rest.

It was natural that they should put their heads together and converse.

"Close call, wasn't it?" cried Dick Boomer. "I wouldn't risk it again."

"You are right," replied Frank.

"Bejabers, I'm afther thinkin' the best place is aboard the boat after all," said Barney.

The Celt's companions did not dispute this. But Frank said:

"We will have to try it over again when we find the sunken pirate."

"Ah, but that will not be so risky," ventured Dick.

"Don't be too sure. There is no greater risk than prowling around in the hold of a sunken wreck!"

"I am satisfied with this little experience until we get to the wreck," said Dick.

"Bejabers, so am I!" agreed Barney. "I wondher if the naygur thinks we're iver comin' back at all!"

"I have no doubt he is concerned," said Frank. "We will go along at once."

"One moment," said Dick. "Do you feel as if the air in your helmet was getting thin?"

"Well, just a trifle," replied Frank. "No doubt the chemicals need replenishing."

"Then we had better get back to the Lance as speedily as possible."

"Yes."

With this Frank Reade, Jr., sprang up. The others did the same. Then a start for the boat was made.

The pathway of light was broad and very glaring. Nothing could be seen of the Lance until they had approached quite near to it.

Then Frank became aware of a startling fact, which caused him to come to a halt.

His familiarity with submarine phenomena satisfied him that there was a commotion of the water not far away. The reverberations against his helmet taught him this.

What could it be? Was some monster shark, whale, or other fish approaching? For a moment fear struck him.

Then he thought of the Lance.

He shaded his eyes and tried to overcome the searchlight's glare. But as he did so the light was for a moment obscured by a shadow.

Then all three divers beheld what was to them a most startling and awful sight.

They saw the Lance plainly enough, but the submarine boat was in the folds of mighty snake-like arms. These were completely wound about its hull.

They were the tentacles of a giant octopus, large and powerful enough to have dragged a ship to the bottom of the sea.

The monster had evidently crawled from its lair near and hit upon the Lance as lawful and toothsome prey!

CHAPTER V.

THE ISLAND.

The sight of the Lance in the clutches of the octopus was certainly a thrilling as well as terrifying one.

Frank and Dick and Barney stood appalled at the spectacle.

It seemed to them for a moment as if the submarine boat was doomed.

The octopus was certainly powerful enough to have dragged the boat a considerable distance. But though his powerful tentacles might strain, they could not break the shell of the boat.

Frank felt sure of this, for he knew that it was made of the best steel, and would not readily yield.

But, upon the other hand, what must be the sensations of Pomp in the interior of the Lance, and how would the divers be able to get aboard again?

To approach the octopus might be to tempt him to direct his attacks upon them. This would be serious.

And yet there was no telling how long the octopus would maintain his hold upon the craft.

To wait for him to abandon it would be fatal, most likely, for the chemicals in the generators were failing fast.

The position of our submarine voyagers, therefore, can be readily seen to be of a most desperate sort.

What was to be done?"

But at this moment Pomp was seen at one of the windows signaling them. The darky was in great distress.

Frank signaled him in return to have courage, and try to shake off the octopus by lifting the boat.

Pomp obeyed this injunction; but the weight of the monster was so great that it anchored the Lance.

The electric engines were not powerful enough to raise it.

Truly the sea monster had the best of the situation. Matters were getting desperate. Something must be done at once.

And in this dilemma an idea for getting aboard the Lance struck Frank.

He hastily motioned the others to follow him.

The head of the octopus was on the other side of the submarine boat. The three divers were concealed from the monster's cat-like eyes by the hull of the boat.

Of course there was vast risk in doing so, but Frank believed that he could creep up and gain the vestibule without being discovered by the octopus.

The attempt was made.

Like phantoms the three divers glided up to the hull of the boat. They were near enough to touch one of the mighty tentacles which would have crushed them like mites.

Over the rail they crawled and reached the door of the vestibule.

The trick was done. They were safe.

Into the vestibule they crept. The door was closed and Frank turned the pump valve.

Barney was already gasping for breath. But in a few moments the water was pumped out and he had plenty of air.

The three divers bounded into the cabin and drew long breaths.

It was like coming back from the tomb, and they had good reason for feeling indeed overjoyed.

"Golly fo' glory, Marse Frank, I'se done glad yo' come!" cried Pomp wildly. "Dis chile done fo't dat de boat was gwine to pieces fo' suah!"

"Well, we're glad to get back, Pomp!" cried Frank. "We have been at death's door!"

Barney briefly related their experiences. Pomp listened with wonderment.

But Frank had already gone into the dynamo-room. He was well aware of the fact that something must be done at once to get rid of the octopus.

He was not long in formulating a plan. He produced a long wire carefully insulated with rubber.

To the metal end of this he attached parallel wires and two metal discs. Then he attached the other end of the wire to the dynamos.

He turned these on full force. Then he donned his helmet, and carrying the wire with him, passed it through a small valve into the vestibule.

Thence he emerged cautiously upon deck. He pushed the wire and metal discs toward the octopus' head along the hull of the boat. It was a ticklish task, for there was danger of getting into the clutch of a writhing tentacle.

But nothing of the kind happened. The disc suddenly rested full against the body of the monster.

Frank made sure that the discs had equal pressure, and that the water would not conduct the current away. Then he pressed the little key which he held in his hand to control the current.

The full force of the dynamos was given the monster.

The effect was thrilling. With a terrible hiss and a convulsion of its body, the octopus slid back.

Its tentacles relaxed its deadly grip for a moment. Barney in the pilot-house was given the signal.

He pressed the lever which regulated the pneumatic chamber. The water was instantly expelled and the boat sprang upward.

Up to the surface shot the Lance. The next moment it was in the upper air.

But darkness was all about. They had been under the surface eight hours, and some thrilling events had transpired during that time.

All were more or less exhausted, and Frank allowed the boat to lay to that night.

Pomp served up as fine a repast as his culinary skill would allow, and all partook heartily.

"Another day," cried Frank Reade, Jr., "and we shall locate the sunken pirate."

"Good!" cried Dick Boomer, joyfully. "I shall welcome the hour."

"But we may have worse experiences than those we have just passed through," declared Frank.

"How so?"

"If that rascal, Jose Romero, carries out his threat, we may have to fight a gang of latter-day pirates to get the treasure."

"All the better!" cried Dick. "How that will write up for the News Grabber!"

All were in good spirits after the supper was partaken of.

Barney brought out his fiddle and Pomp his banjo, and they indulged in a general jollification.

All slept sound that night.

The next day the Lance was once more gliding on her way toward the spot where was the sunken pirate.

Several sails were sighted on the horizon, but none of these, to Frank Reade, Jr., bore the appearance of belonging to the schooner of Jose Romero.

Frank had no doubt but that the Spaniard was in earnest, and would endeavor to prevent him from recovering the treasure. There would surely be a collision.

Not that he feared the result of such a contingency; on the contrary, he felt convinced of worsting the Spaniard.

But yet he would rather not come in collision with him at all. Hoping this would be the case, Frank dismissed the subject.

Frank followed the instruction of the log book in regard to latitude exactly.

And late in the afternoon the submarine boat made the exact latitude and longitude given.

To Frank's surprise a small island was in view not half a mile from the spot. This had not been mentioned in the log.

"That is queer!" he muttered. "I wonder what it means? Have we made a mistake in our reckoning?"

To make sure he went over it again. But there was no mistake.

This was certainly the spot.

All were on deck and much excited now that the critical moment had arrived. It certainly would not take long to ascertain whether there was any sunken ship there or not.

Frank had brought the Lance to a stop and was about to propose a descent when Dick Boomer pointed to the island.

"Look!" he cried; "a sail!"

This was true.

Just over a small headland the white expanse of a ship's topsail was seen. Frank's curiosity was at once aroused.

Was the island inhabited?

He hardly believed it. The sail might belong to the *Manova*, the craft of Jose Romero.

The young inventor was half tempted to go over and ascertain. Indeed, he was resolved to do this, but first thought he would descend and make sure of the location of the sunken pirate.

So Frank shouted:

"All in the cabin. Barney and Pomp, look out for the vestibule doors!"

Quickly all darted into the cabin.

Frank pressed the lever and the Lance began to sink. But even as she was just disappearing under the waves a startling thing happened.

There was a sudden upheaval of the sea; a terrible roar, and the Lance rose upon a mountainous wave, and came within an ace of being turned bottom upward.

The sea about tossed and churned into pyramids of water twenty feet high. But as quickly as it had come, the commotion ceased.

Frank had, with rare presence of mind, closed the air-chamber lever. The Lance floated upon the foam-crested waves.

What did it mean?

Barney and Pomp and Dick all ran into the pilot-house.

"Golly, Marse Frank!" gasped Pomp, "whatever was dat fing?"

"Bejabers, was it an earthquake?" exploded Barney.

"Mercy on us!" cried Dick Boomer, "I thought we had been blown up!"

Frank Reade, Jr.'s quick intuition had told him the truth.

"And so we have," he said, rigidly. "Barney, stay by this lever."

He sprang to the door leading out upon the upper deck. There, lying across the deck, was a wire. Frank picked up one end of it and pulled upon it.

It extended in the direction of the island shore, and was fast. Even as he picked it up Frank dropped it, as he experienced a slight electric shock.

"What do you make of it, Frank?" asked Dick Boomer, anxiously.

"Well," said Frank in reply, "it means that it was no fault of our enemy that we were not blown into eternity. The attempt was certainly made, and a torpedo was the instrument."

"Mercy on us!" gasped Dick; "who did it?"

"I believe that yonder sail can explain it. If I am not mistaken, this is the work of Romero."

"The Spaniard?"

"Yes."

"But what—how did he place torpedoes under us so cleverly?"

"By means of wires and an anchor, probably," said Frank. "It was anchored just under the surface and a network of wires laid so that if the keel of our boat should strike one we would be wrecked. We should be at the bottom now if we had been directly over that torpedo when it exploded."

Frank Reade, Jr., had hit the truth. For a time all were too deeply overcome to make speech.

Slowly the white sail was rounding the island point.

Soon it cleared the land, and the craft was plainly seen.

"Just as I thought," said Frank Reade, Jr., grimly. "That is the schooner of Jose Romero."

CHAPTER VI.

RECONNOITERING.

"And it was really his work?" ventured Dick Boomer.

"Certainly."

"But he did not succeed."

"I am not so sure. Some of the machinery was badly shaken. I fear the worst."

Frank Reade, Jr., went quickly back into the pilot-house. It was his purpose to descend with the Lance.

He pressed the lever.

There was a buzzing and whirring, but the boat did not sink. Frank, with a couple of strides, went into the engine-room.

His face wore an expression of dismay.

It required but a very brief inspection to tell him the appalling truth.

"The shock has disarranged the machinery," he said. We cannot work the submarine boat again until it has had repairs."

"Mercy on us!" replied Dick; "and how long will that take?"

"I do not know," replied Frank; "the boat may have to go back to Readestown."

The chagrin and disappointment of all showed in their faces.

"Then we must lose the treasure!" cried Dick in great heat. "Confound that meddlesome Spaniard. We ought to give him a taste of Yankee justice!"

All eyes were turned angrily toward the approaching sail. "We will hope for the best," said Frank; "perhaps I can repair the damage here. But it will take several days."

"And in the meantime those rascals will be trying to raise the treasure themselves."

"I suppose so."

"I wonder if they have located the wreck?"

"We do not know."

"Begorra, Misther Frank!" cried Barney. "Av yez arved thim roight yez wud blow thim up fer what they've one!"

"Perhaps I will," said Frank, coolly.

The schooner was every moment drawing nearer. Frank was not disposed to beat a retreat.

It could be seen that the craft carried several cannon, and her rail was lined with armed men.

As she drew within hailing distance a man in the shrouds shouted:

"Boat ahoy!"

The hail was in Spanish, but Frank answered promptly: "Ahoy the ship!"

"What are you doing here?" came back the insolent inquiry.

Frank was angered.

"What business is that of yours?" he retorted.

"If you have come to dive for the gold of Jose Romero, then we warn you, on peril of your life, to begone!"

Frank mounted the high deck of the Lance, and made reply:

"I demand to know if it was you who so cowardly set that torpedo which came so near blowing us up?"

The reply came back:

"We will blow you into eternity if you do not leave these parts!"

"I will never leave until I have recovered the sunken gold!" cried Frank, defiantly. "And you cannot prevent my getting it."

Curses loud and savage came from the schooner. Frank saw the crew of the craft rush to quarters, and foreseeing the peril, he sprang into the pilot-house and ran the Lance across the schooner's bows.

He was out of range of the broadside, and not a moment too soon.

The villainous Spaniards would have fired upon the Lance in another moment. As it was, they began unlimbering a swivel.

This was quickly brought to bear, but Frank had put the lithe Lance to her best speed, and was already nearly out of danger.

Boom! The gun spoke and the shot passed within a few feet of the Lance.

But though a number of shots were fired, no harm was done.

The Lance easily ran out of range. The Spaniards were discomfited.

Frank was chafing like a restless tiger.

"Ah!" he muttered, "how foolish I was not to have mounted the electric gun I have at home upon the Lance!"

"Arrah, an' that's thrue, sor!" cried Barney. "Shure, moighty little chance wud they stand agin that!"

"Humph! I could blow them out of the water!" averred Frank.

"Golly, dat am so!" said Pomp. "It's too drefful bad!"

"What will you do, Frank?" asked Dick.

"The best we can do is to try and repair the Lance as quickly as possible," said Frank. "Then we can just go down there to the wreck and carry it off in spite of them."

"Right!" cried Dick. "Let us lose no time. In what way can I help you?"

"Not in any way just now," said Frank. "But darkness is at hand. We cannot do anything until another day."

The schooner soon gave up the chase after the fleet Lance. The darkness rapidly shut down over the sea.

Frank brought the Lance about for a new course around the coral island. He did not fear the schooner.

"She can't hurt us," he declared. "We can run away from her!"

Moreover, Frank was somewhat curious in regard to the character of the island.

He felt sure that the Spaniards had a rendezvous there. He was anxious to ascertain its character.

"No doubt Romero the Red used to rendezvous on that island," he said. "It is at least worth looking over."

So he ran around the upper end of it. He saw enough to satisfy him that there was quite a settlement of the Spaniards on the isle.

"Doubtless they mean to stay there until they can recover the gold," he muttered. "But this settlement is on that side of the island. Probably they never came over here."

The night was an extremely dark one. The lights of the Spanish settlement could be seen in the distance.

A daring idea struck Frank.

This was to risk a scouting trip ashore. He was extremely anxious to learn the exact position of the Spaniards.

He imparted the scheme to Dick, who was enthusiastically in favor of it.

"Of course you will allow me to accompany you?" he asked eagerly.

"If you desire," said Frank. "Perhaps two of us will be enough. We will leave Barney and Pomp to defend the Lance."

This did not hardly meet with the approval of the Celt and the darky, but they never demurred at any of Frank's orders.

So it was decided that Frank and Dick should go ashore. Arrangements were quickly made.

All was now as black as Erebus. It was not possible for any person on shore to see what they were doing.

Yet Frank well knew the value of caution.

He turned the searchlight upon the shore and closely studied it.

No sign of human life was seen, so Frank decided that it would be safe enough to risk a landing.

A small rubber boat, canoe shape, and made to fold up in a small compass, was brought out.

Frank entered this and Dick followed him. Both were armed and well equipped for a risky expedition.

The lights on board the submarine boat were all put out. This was to mislead the foe, if they should chance to discover its presence.

Then silently the two explorers paddled ashore in the rubber canoe.

Reaching the beach, the light boat was drawn out and secreted in a crevice of the cliff. Then a brief reconnoissance was in order.

Frank went down the beach in the shadow of the cliffs,

and Dick went the other way. Both were quickly satisfied that no foes were in the vicinity.

They returned to the spot they had started from, and Frank said:

"Well, Dick, we shall incur some risk, but I think our best way is to stick to the shore all the way."

"I agree with you," said Dick.

"If we attempt to cut across the island we shall encounter ground with which we are not familiar. The result might be that we would stumble upon the foe or get lost."

"Then let us stick to the shore."

"Very well."

This question settled they set out with all speed along the beach.

It was a long trip around the island, and a couple of hours elapsed before the lights of the Spanish camp showed.

Then, as they were silently gliding along by the face of the cliff Dick clutched Frank's arm.

"What's the matter?" asked the young inventor, in a startled whisper.

"Do you see a shadowy form just ahead?"

Frank did see it.

Through the darkness and near the water line a tall dark form was advancing. Both scouts crouched low under the cliff.

In a few moments the tread of the person advancing could be plainly heard, and now our adventurers saw what they had not seen before.

There was a legion of other forms in the rear of this one.

A band of armed men were quickly opposite their position. The beach trembled with their tread and the rattle of cutlasses could be plainly heard.

"It is Romero's gang!" whispered Dick. "Where can they be going?"

"No doubt they are looking for the Lance, fearful that we may come ashore and attack them unawares," said Frank.

"Against such odds?"

"Why not? Is there any other good reason for their patrolling the beach?"

Dick was bound to admit that there was none. The shadowy band passed, not a word being spoken by any of them.

When they were well out of sight and hearing, the two scouts emerged from their hiding places.

They had no idea of turning back. Both were all the more eager to get a view of the Spanish camp.

And they were soon rewarded. Turning an angle in the

cliff wall they came into view of a high, sloping tract of land extending down to the waters of the little bay.

Here were several huge bonfires lightly burning, and in their light a collection of rough huts were to be seen.

In the waters of the bay rode at anchor the schooner Manola. A huge raft lay upon the sands of the beach.

And upon the raft Frank saw an object which explained to him fully the purpose of the pirates.

It was a huge diving-bell made of sheet iron. With this, then, the Spaniards hoped to recover the sunken treasure.

It was not at all improbable that they might succeed, as he well knew.

Diving by means of a bell was certainly practicable, and had been many times employed with success. More than ever the young inventor saw the necessity of repairing the mechanism of the Lance.

Numbers of the Spanish crew could be seen lounging about the huts.

It was but a temporary settlement, and evidently created only for the purpose of a rendezvous until the gold was recovered.

Frank did not believe that the piratical crew had as yet recovered the treasure. If they had, of course they would not linger in this vicinity.

So the young inventor took courage. He turned to Dick and said :

"Well, Dick, I think I have gained all the knowledge of the settlement I want. I can see that it is but a temporary camp, and the isle otherwise uninhabited. Shall we go?"

But Dick Boomer clutched Frank's arm with a whisper of alarm.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTURED BY THE FOE.

"Hush!" whispered Dick, sibilantly. "Do you see a dark form crouching just there to your right?"

Frank turned his head. There, just in the verge of a clump of brush, sure enough there was a crouching form.

Dick's discovery had been none too soon.

For a moment Frank Reade, Jr., was undecided how to act. He had no doubt but that the unknown had discovered them, and that their presence on the isle was known.

Such a realization could not help but give him a chill of alarm and dread.

What should he do? There was but a moment of time in which to act. All depended upon quick action.

A shrill, sibilant whistle suddenly rose upon the night air.

It was answered from the camp. Men were seen gliding down to the shore. Frank was sure that they were discovered.

"Dick, we're in for it!" he whispered. "Keep close by me."

"All right. Lead the way."

Frank was about to do this when a thrilling incident happened.

A harsh voice came out of the gloom:

"Make a move and you are dead men! Who are you?"

Frank was for a moment in a quandary. Then he replied :

"A couple of the gang."

The query had been in Spanish and his reply was in the same language. This had half disarmed the challenger.

"If you are of the gang, advance and give the brotherhood grip."

This was a poser. Of course Frank could not nor would not do this. It would be equivalent to surrender.

So he clutched Dick's arm.

"Come; we must make a break. Go for yonder high ground."

Like rockets the two shot forward. The result was most exciting and nigh disastrous for them.

Pistol shots rang out and bullets whistled about them. Loud cries and the trampling of feet in pursuit followed.

The two fugitives ran like greyhounds for the high land.

This was back of the settlement, and beyond it was a forest and the interior of the island.

The forest would at least afford protection, as Frank well knew. Then they could trust to darkness and good fortune to reach the point where they had left the rubber boat.

On they ran like deer.

The pursuers were for a time quite close in the rear. But the two fugitives finally outstripped them.

Deep in the forest, and finally safe from immediate danger, they paused to rest.

Frank knew that no time was to be lost in reaching their boat and returning to the Lance.

If they did not, at the earliest possible moment the Spaniards would have the coast lined with guards.

To be captured by Romero's men would indeed be a serious thing.

And Frank had no intention or desire of allowing such a thing to happen. He chose the course which he believed would lead them to the boat, and strode forward rapidly.

But it seemed an interminable way across the isle.

"Whew!" exclaimed Dick Boomer, finally; "where are we, Frank? I should think we had walked forty miles."

"It must be a tremendous distance across this island," said Frank. "I thought we should see the water before this."

The truth was, in the darkness, they had been really walking about in a circle without gaining anything on their journey. A suspicion of this had begun to cross Frank's mind when a startling thing happened.

This was a sudden vivid lightning flash and a tremendous clap of thunder.

Then a dull soughing wind came wailing through the trees. A storm was coming up for a certain fact.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Dick; "are we to be caught out in that?"

"A storm!" gasped the young inventor. "I fear Barney and Pomp will be driven to sea, even if harm is not done the Lance."

"Will not the boat stand a storm?"

"I fear not such as we have in these latitudes. The wind blows so hard that it will almost blow a sailing craft out of the water. The Lance was not made to weather a rough storm."

"But did you not expect to encounter such in this part of the world?"

"Oh, certainly. But my plan is to descend to a depth beyond the reach of much motion until it is over."

"Ah, I see!"

"The Lance is a very delicate bit of work. She is pliable and stanch, but of course not strong enough for hurricanes."

"Then we must get back to the Lance at once. Are you good for it, Frank?"

"I am. We should now be not far from the coast."

"Let us hope so."

So the two explorers dashed on. But every moment the wind grew in force, the thunder crashed and the lightning flashed.

Then the tornado broke.

Over the island it swept like a living fury. Trees were uprooted; the air was filled with flying debris, and a literal pandemonium ensued.

The water was driven in a deluge through the air. Few who have not witnessed such can truly conceive the fearful force of a West Indian storm.

Frank and Dick were fortunate enough to reach the shelter of a large rock, else the result might have been quite serious for them.

For fully an hour the storm raged, but the rain fell in torrents afterward, and it was daylight before they dared to emerge from their concealment.

Then the situation in which they found themselves looked indeed serious.

In daylight they were apt to be spotted by the Spaniards if they ventured out of the forest.

Moreover, it was morally certain that the wretches would search the island most thoroughly for them. In that event capture would be almost certain.

In dismay they looked at each other.

"It's a bad fix, Frank," said Dick. "It's all up with us if they catch us."

"They shall never do that," declared Frank, resolutely. "Our only hope is in finding the Lance yet at her moorings."

"I don't believe she could help being blown to sea!" declared Dick.

Frank set his lips grimly.

"We will find out," he muttered.

It was an easy matter in daylight to thread the forest. In a very short time the labyrinth was left behind, and they emerged upon high land overlooking the sea.

Below was the beach. They were about a mile southward of their landing place.

Frank at once led the way in that direction. After a time they came out upon a headland, from whence the spot where the Lance had been left could be seen.

Breathless with apprehension the two fugitives searched the wide expanse with their keenest gaze.

But the submarine boat was nowhere to be seen.

It was gone.

Doubtless the storm had blown it far out to sea.

A groan escaped Frank Reade, Jr.'s white lips.

"My God!" he gasped. "I fear that is the end of the Lance. Dick, we are in a hard scrape now!"

What was to be done? There was plainly but one resort. This was to remain on the isle in hiding until the Lance should return, provided it had weathered the storm.

Barney and Pomp were good sailors, and Frank had no doubt but that they would find their way back to the isle.

The two fugitives had been standing in an exposed position on the cliff.

They had been so absorbed in the quest for the Lance that they were for the moment quite oblivious of surroundings.

They were brought back to a realization of their true position by a distant shout. Instantly both turned.

An appalling sight met their gaze.

Upon all sides but that of the ocean they were hemmed in by armed men. They were coming up and down the shore, and even out of the forest in their rear.

The Spaniards, determined in their quest, had formed a

line across the island, and had kept straight across through and over all obstacles.

The two fugitives were certainly run down. There was but one avenue of escape, and that was the boat.

But the little cockleshell of a boat could not hope to live in the high sea outside. It would be folly to launch it.

Dick and Frank looked at each other with pallid faces.

"We are caught!" said Frank.

"It's all up!"

"There is no use in fighting. The odds are too great."

"Right! It is best to surrender."

This was certainly the wisest move. The Spaniards were closing in on them with yells of triumph.

There was no other move to make, so Frank and Dick threw up their arms.

In a few moments the foe were all about them.

Rough, brigand-like fellows they were, and armed to the teeth.

Captain Romero, with an evil light of triumph in his eyes, was the foremost.

"Ha, senors," he said in Spanish. "You are caught at your little game. Where is your boat?"

"I do not know," replied Frank. "What do you want of us?"

"You are my prisoners!"

"What for?"

The Spanish captain laughed.

"You shall learn!" he cried. "Jose Romero allows no one to cross his path. The treasure at the bottom of the sea is mine. If you are dead you cannot claim it."

"Oh, then you mean to kill us?"

"Si, senor."

"But that would be murder."

"Senor misjudges Romero," he said with a shrug. "His ancestors have been pirates. Their motto always was: 'Never spare a foe's life.' It was a very good one, for dead men can do no harm. Do you see?"

Neither Dick nor Frank would gratify the pirates enough to show fear. But inwardly they were keenly dismayed.

Frank had no reason to doubt but that the villain would carry out his threat.

Already the young inventor repented of his folly in having come ashore. Better to have remained aboard the Lance.

Moreover, the delay was greatly in favor of Romero. It enabled him to perfect his plans. It was a despairing moment for Frank and Dick.

Yet they would not evince this openly to Romero.

They preserved a bold front, and were led away securely bound. In due time the settlement was reached.

Here they were cast into a hut and left to their own reflections.

And bitter ones they were indeed.

They could hear the preparations made by Romero and his gang to take the diving-bell out and explore for the wreck of the Diabolo.

If the Spaniards should succeed in recovering the sunken treasure, then the expedition of the Lance would be a failure. Moreover, if Frank and Dick lost their lives in the bargain, it would be a terrible sequel to what had seemed a certainty to win a fortune.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON BOARD THE LANCE.

The storm had struck the Lance at the moment when Barney and Pomp were fortunately well prepared for it.

They had kept a keen lookout for those on shore.

Barney had again and again sent the searchlight's rays over the intervening water. But no sign of the returning boat was seen.

But when the thunder and lightning came, Barney cried:

"Begorra, naygur, we're in a bad scrape now. Phwat the devil will we do? Shure, the storm will blow us out to say!"

"Golly sakes!" gasped Pomp, "dat am a suttin' fac', Iish. Upon mah wo'd we'se gwine to see heaps ob trubble."

And, as fate had ordained, they did see lots of trouble. A few moments later the Lance was scudding before the storm like a rocket.

Had not the mechanism of the boat been out of order it would have been an easy matter to have sent the Lance to the bottom out of harm's way.

But unfortunately Barney and Pomp were unable to do this.

All they could do was to hold the Lance before the storm and keep her electrical engines going so that she would not founder.

The two brave fellows clung to their posts well and nobly.

The wind howled like a thousand fiends, the sea ran mountains high, and every moment it seemed as if the light boat must be engulfed.

But Barney and Pomp hung to their posts so faithfully that she survived the blow in good shape.

The storm finally ceased to rage, and the Lance pitched in a choppy sea.

Barney promptly turned her about and headed her back for the island. Until daylight the Lance held this course.

It was reckoned by both that the island must be sighted before two hours' run to the windward.

But daylight did not show it upon the horizon.

Indeed, noon come, and the island did not appear.

Barney, who was a good sailor, was completely taken aback.

"Bejabers, I don't understand that!" he cried. "Shure, we cudn't have been blowed so far out av the way!"

"Huh! Mebbe you'se hab los' yo' reckoning, chile," suggested Pomp.

Barney was by no means sure but that this might be so. Therefore, he went into the cabin to get his bearings over again.

And this time he found that Pomp's surmise was correct.

They had been traveling too far to the south all the while, and were now the incredible distance of one hundred miles from the island.

It is needless to say that Barney lost no time in holding the Lance over to the new course.

All speed was put on, yet they could not hope to reach the island before dark.

Barney lashed the wheel and then went below with Pomp.

"Begorra, naygur, I'd loike to know phwat ails the machinerry av the air-chamber!" he cried. "Shure, av we only knew how to repair it we cud have it all roight fer Misther Frank whin he comes aboard agin."

"Golly! dat wud jes' be a big scheme!" agreed Pomp; "but however kin yo' do dat, chile?"

"Bejabers, I'll thry it, anyway."

Barney had worked around the machine shops in Readestown long enough to have become quite a machinist himself.

Therefore he went about his project with something like a correct idea of what was needed.

He went below into the hold and carefully examined all the valves and tubes connected with the pneumatic chambers.

And there he discovered the cause of all the trouble. To his surprise he found that it could be remedied in a very simple manner.

One of the pneumatic tubes had been crushed by the shock of the torpedo explosion, the partition having yielded enough to jam it into a solid timber.

This had shut off the pressure and prevented the machinery from working.

The remedy was simply to repair the break in the tube,

and there was no doubt but that the air-chamber would be easily relieved.

"Whurroo!" cried Barney. "Shure, I'll soon fix the thing. Misther Frank will be delighted to foind it all roight agin."

"Golly! I'se done glad ob dat!" cried Pomp, joyfully.

Barney scraped up all the tools he could find and went to work with Pomp's able assistance.

The tube was straightened; the joint successfully made, and some solder quickly touched up the leak. Then Barney went into the engine-room and pressed the pneumatic lever.

It responded faithfully to his touch and the boat sank.

It rose again as Barney pressed the other lever. The Lance was all right again. Surely this was a matter of congratulation.

Barney could not push the Lance ahead now fast enough.

But darkness shut down and still the island did not come into view.

An hour later, however, Pomp, who was bow watch, cried:

"Hi, dar, chile. A light ahead!"

Barney tumbled out of the pilot-house.

"Bejabers, yez don't mane it?" he cried. "Shure, I kin see it mesilf."

Ahead upon the horizon was a glimmering star of light. There was no doubt but that it came from the island.

A short while later other lights were seen. They were bonfires at the Spanish settlement.

Barney stood around the end of the island, and ran the submarine boat quite near the shore.

When opposite the spot where Frank and Dick had landed, Barney swept the shore with the searchlight.

The result was astounding.

Instead of seeing his friends, the Celt saw a number of armed men. A crash of firearms broke upon the air, and bullets came whistling over the water.

It was a close escape for Barney. One of the bullets even grazed his cheek.

He beat a retreat into the pilot-house.

"Begorra, it's all up wid Misther Frank and Dick," he wailed. "Shure, the Spaniards have them, I'm sure."

"Massy sakes!" gasped Pomp. "Don' yo' go fo' to say sich a fing as dat, chile. I won' beliebe a wo'd ob it."

Barney sent the Lance out of range.

Then with the searchlight he began to study the situation.

If Frank and Dick were not prisoners, where were they? Had they remained on the island all this lapse of time?

This was the question which had occurred full force to Barney.

There was no easy answer at hand. It was possible that they were yet in hiding on the isle.

If so, then they would see the lights of the Lance and know that it had returned. At least Barney could do no better than to wait for something to turn up.

He was resolved to thoroughly search the shore.

So he sent the Lance along toward the settlement, using the searchlight all the while. This revealed many startling things.

Guards were stationed along the shore at intervals.

As the flashlight shone upon them, they would level their guns and fire. The Lance was not out of range, but the bullets did no harm.

It was a matter of deepest concern to Barney and Pomp where Frank and Dick were.

Barney could hardly restrain himself from going ashore. He chafed like a caged tiger.

It occurred to him that they might have been killed by the Spaniards, or perhaps that they might be prisoners. The uncertainty and the suspense to Barney were terrible.

"Bejabers, phwat ought we to do, naygur?" he asked of Pomp. "On me word, I have a moind to attack thim rapscallions' single-handed!"

"Don' yo' be so foolish as dat?" remonstrated Pomp, cautiously. "Dat would be a bery foolish fing to do."

"I suppose it would," agreed Pomp, reluctantly. "Hip, hooray! Luk out there!"

The latter exclamation was caused by a startling incident. There was a loud boom of cannon, and a solid shot went humming over the Lance.

The schooner was within range, and had opened fire upon them.

"Shut off the current, naygur!" cried Barney. "Shure, we'll soon sphile that thrick!"

This was quickly done, and the submarine boat was dark upon the water. The night was so black that without the aid of the electric lights no foe could find a target to aim at.

It was a wise move. The pirates fired a few more shots over the Lance, but they did no harm.

Then the submarine boat approached safely within a few hundred yards of the pirate vessel.

The doings on shore could be plainly seen by the light of the beacon fires. The whole camp seemed in a state of greatest excitement.

Barney was on deck now and safely surveying the scene.

"Bejabers!" cried Barney, "there's something up over there!"

"Golly, dey're habbin' some sort ob a picnic!"

"Arrah, an' it's very excotiting!"

Something certainly was up in the Spaniard camp, but just what was the trouble our friends had no means of telling.

The pirates were running to and fro and yelling excitedly. Some of them were upon the shore, and others with lights were going into the interior of the island.

Barney and Pomp were puzzled to understand it all.

"On me wurrud!" cried the Celt. "I'd give me dudeen to foind out phwat's up!"

"I don' fink dat we'se gwine fo' to do dat, chile," said Pomp. "We suttinly kain't go ashore!"

"No; in course we can't; but, begorra, I'll tell yez phwat we kin do!"

"Well, chile?"

"We kin ram their schooner an' sink it fer the spal-peens."

"Does yo' beliebe dat, sah?"

"Yis; I do."

"Am de ram ob de Lance done strong enough fo' to do dat, frien'?"

"Bejabers, that's phwat it's for!"

But Pomp was not inclined to agree with Barney. He did not believe it was the best plan to ram the schooner.

"Don' yo' see, chile, dat if we does dat we gits in front ob dem cannon. Jes one ob dem balls wud blow dis lilly boat into kingdom come fo' suah!"

This was true. Barney saw the point and was reflecting upon it, when Pomp clutched his arm.

"Sh!" whispered the darky. "Wha'ever yo' call dat?"

It was a dark object in the water which was approaching the Lance. The astonished negro and Irishman tried in vain to make out its character.

"Golly!" whispered Pomp. "I done fink webettah git out ob dis. Wha'ever dat is we don' know!"

But before they could carry this logical conclusion into effect a startling incident occurred.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE MADE GOOD.

Voces came from the direction of the dark object.

"Mercy on us, Frank," said a familiar voice. "What is that ahead? A rock or a part of the shore?"

Barney and Pomp almost yelled in their delight.

"Dat am Marse Dick Boomer!" gasped Pomp. "An' Marse Frank am wid him!"

"Whurroo!" cried Barney. "Aisy, now, an' let me turn on the loight!"

"Don' yo' do dat!" protested Pomp. "It would neber do, fo' de foe would see us suah!"

"If I am not dreaming," came a voice out of the gloom, "I heard Pomp's voice a moment since."

"Suah, an' yo' jes' did dat, Marse Frank!" cried the overjoyed darky. "Cum right along dis way, sah!"

Exclamations of astonishment came from the darkness.

"Is it you, Barney and Pomp?"

"Begorra, it air!" replied Barney.

"It am nobody else, Marse Frank," replied Pomp.

And the next moment alongside the Lance there shot a clumsy boat, with two dark forms in it.

A moment later and Frank Reade, Jr., and Dick Boomer were aboard the Lance.

Explanations were quickly in order.

The two prisoners had remained in the hut all that day. For some fortunate reason Romero did not return to execute his threat of executing them.

The truth was the Spaniard had been very busy with the diving-bell.

It had been floated out to the locality of the sunken treasure, and several descents made.

But all had been fruitless. The wreck had not been found.

Romero returned to the island disappointed and somewhat out of temper. But he did not visit the prisoners.

Meanwhile Frank and Dick, left to themselves, were not idle.

Every conceivable method of escape was considered.

Finally Dick managed to free his wrists of the cords which bound them. It was then but a few moments' work to liberate Frank.

And this was after they had remained all day in the wretched hut. Darkness had come again, and the Spaniards were all engaged in preparing for their evening meal.

It was really the most favorable opportunity they could have chosen for their escape.

The plan was a daring one, and might prove a failure. Yet Frank could see no other.

This was to spring upon and overpower the guard at the door and make a dash for the shore. There was a bend in the cliff wall, and once around this they would be out of range of bullets.

It was not a hundred yards to the turn in the cliff. Ten or twelve seconds would enable them to reach it.

The Spaniards would hardly recover their wits in that time.

But there were two guards at the door for a time. One of these, however, fortunately left, and the coast was clear.

Frank and Dick waited until the vicinity was quite deserted.

Then, just as the guard passed the door, they flung it open and sprang out.

The fellow half turned, but a stunning blow upon the head laid him out senseless.

Like arrows from the bow, the two prisoners shot for the shore. They flashed down over the greensward, and in a few seconds were upon the sands.

Just as they reached the angle in the cliff a mighty yell went up.

The Spaniards saw them and understood. The result was most exciting. The camp was thrown into a state of the maddest and wildest kind.

It was this furore which Barney and Pomp had seen from the deck of the Lance.

Little they had suspected the cause of it.

Frank and Dick, turning the cliff corner, were for a moment in a quandary how to act.

To continue on along the shore would avail little, as searching parties would again surround and corner them.

A boat lay upon the sands.

It was a clumsy, unsafe affair, yet Frank laid hold of the thwart.

"Put it into the water, Dick!" he cried. "It is our only hope!"

"All right!"

"Now—together!"

The boat was quickly in the surf. Fortunately, the oars were in it. Out into the gloom they shot.

They were just in time. Hardly had they slipped into the darkness of the bay when the Spaniards came dashing down to the water's edge.

They ran along the shore, thinking the prisoners had gone in that direction.

But they were off the scent, and Frank and Dick for the moment were safe.

Out into the bay they pulled.

They had but a slight idea as to what would be the end of it all. With the coming of daylight doubtless they would be recaptured.

But there was certainly the consolation of a brief period of liberty.

It was better than remaining in the hut. Fate, however, led them to the Lance, and after all their adventures they were once more safe.

It was a happy meeting on the deck of the submarine boat.

Barney and Pomp recited their thrilling experiences in the storm.

"Noble fellows!" cried Frank, joyfully. "You have done grandly. Your plans were all of the best."

"Golly, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp. "We was neber gwine to gib yo' up if we had to stay yer fo'ever!"

"Bejabers, that's thtrue, sor!" declared Barney.

"You are heroes, both of you!" declared Frank; "but let's have some light on the subject——"

"N—no, sah; don' do dat yit!" protested Pomp.

"Why?" asked Frank in amazement.

"Bekase, sah, dat ar' schooner's guns dead suah fo' to hit us, sah."

"Well, I declare, I never thought of that!" said Frank. "Have they been firing at you?"

"Yes, sah, until we put out de lights."

Frank gazed at the schooner.

"I've half a mind to sink her," he said.

"Bress mah soul!" gasped Pomp. "How you'se gwine do dat, sah?"

"Easy enough," said the young inventor. "I have some electric torpedoes in the cabin. I could steal up and set one under her, then with a hundred-yard wire fire it! There would be nothing left of her but splinters!"

"Do it!" cried Dick, excitedly.

But Frank shook his head.

"Think of the human lives aboard her!" he said.

"But they will not hesitate to take our lives," said Dick.

"Very well. Let them have the inclination," said Frank.

"But will we be able to recover the treasure in spite of them?"

"I believe it," said Frank. "But first of all, however, I must repair the pneumatic tubes."

"Bejabers, yez needn't trouble yerself about that," said Barney.

Frank gave a start of surprise.

"Why?" he asked.

"Bekase, sor, they're repaired."

"What?" gasped the young inventor. "What are you talking about, Barney?"

"About the pneumatic tubes, sor."

"Well?"

"They're all roight, sor. The Lance sinks an' rises jist as well as iver she did."

Frank could hardly believe his senses.

"You don't mean it?" he cried, joyfully. "Well, all this good news is too much. How did you do it, Barney?"

The Celt described the derangement of the tube and how he had repaired it. Frank listened with deep interest.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "You are a trump! Then we need bother ourselves no longer about the Spaniards, but go right ahead looking for the treasure on our own account."

"An' shure, sor, I'm afther thinkin' we'll foind it afore they do."

"You're right we will, Barney!" cried Frank; "but come, let us get away from here."

Barney went into the pilot-house and turned the propeller lever.

The Lance shot out into the bay. When a safe distance out the lights were turned on again.

The searchlight was focussed on the schooner and she fired a shot. But it fell short.

The rest of the night was spent in rest, for all were much in need of sleep.

Nothing could be done toward exploring for the treasure until daylight. So it was necessary to wait.

Barney watched half of the night and Pomp the other half.

Near morning Barney thought he would take a look at the schooner. To his surprise it was no longer in the bay.

The searchlight was capable of piercing the darkness for two miles.

Barney therefore began to search for the schooner. He found it finally far to sea. Holding the light upon it for some while, the Celt was surprised to see the craft put about and stand down toward the Lance.

"Bejabers, I belave they've been luking for us!" cried the Celt.

He had half decided to arouse the others.

It was evidently the purpose of the Manola to work up near enough to the submarine boat to give it a volley.

If the Lance could be sunk there would be no further bar to Romero's recovering the sunken treasure.

But Barney started the Lance ahead for a mile, and at the same time extinguished all her lights.

It was easy then to trace the course of the schooner by her lights.

She did not succeed in getting any nearer to the Lance, however, and Barney kept good watch of her.

Daylight came in good time, and all were astir at an early hour.

It was a beautiful morning, a light southwest breeze rippling the water.

Pomp prepared a good breakfast, which all partook of heartily.

Then the plans for the day were discussed. All were engaged thus when Pomp from the deck cried:

"Jes' come on deck, Marse Frank. Dot yer schooner am signaling us!"

All sprang on deck at once.

The schooner was a mile to leeward and was making signals. Frank interpreted them and said:

"She carries a truce and wants to speak to us."

The submarine boat was brought about and went to meet the truce-bearing schooner! There was much speculation as to the purpose of this.

"Perhaps they want to make terms with us!" said Dick Boomer. "I wouldn't divide with them, Frank."

"I have no intention of doing so," said the young inventor.

The schooner drew nearer every moment. Soon she was so near that her rail could be seen lined with men.

"That is near enough!" cried Frank to Barney. "Keep up the distance!"

And the Lance was kept just this distance ahead of the schooner.

But the tall figure of Jose Romero was seen in the chains. At once Frank hailed him.

CHAPTER X.

ROMERO'S TREACHERY.

"Schooner ahoy!" shouted Frank, in the Spanish tongue.

"Ahoy!" came back.

"What do you want?"

"Your surrender!" was the insolent reply.

Frank's whole being was fired with anger. He could hardly contain himself.

"Is that what you carried the truce flag for?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, I will tell you that we have no idea of surrendering. I like your impudence."

"You will like it better, senor, when I have done with you!" was the taunting reply.

Then with a roar like thunder the Manola's swivel spoke, and the shot barely missed the Lance's stern.

This was a literal revelation to those on board the submarine boat.

The Spanish captain proved himself a treacherous dog by that act. He had employed the flag of truce simply as a subterfuge to entrap the Lance.

But his dishonest scheme failed.

The first shot missed the stern of the Lance. The second just grazed the side rail.

Should one of those hit the submarine boat it would undoubtedly be ruined. Frank cried excitedly:

"Pull the pneumatic lever, Barney! Quick! Let her go down!"

"Mercy on us!" cried Dick Boomer. "The scoundrels are playing a treacherous game."

"Yes," cried Frank. "Into the cabin, every one! Quick!"

Into the cabin they sprang. Swiftly Barney pressed the valve which closed the boat hermetically, and then pulled the pneumatic lever.

It was the saving of the Lance.

She would surely have been riddled with shot had she remained afloat.

As it was she suddenly plunged beneath the waves, to the amazement of the Spaniards. They continued to fire into the water, but the shot never reached the Lance.

Down went the submarine boat until the bottom of the ocean could be seen.

Then the searchlight was sent ahead to look out for obstructions, and the Lance was forged ahead.

She was so skillfully constructed that she was able to sail almost as fast under water as on the surface.

As a result, she had soon put a good distance between her and the spot where she had plunged.

The schooner was now probably out of range, and Frank sent the Lance once more to the surface.

Up out of the depths she came, a dripping monster, into the light of day.

All looked for the schooner.

She was fully a mile away and laying a course for the island. No further attention was paid to her now.

"Now," cried Frank Reade, Jr., earnestly, "we have only to locate the sunken wreck and then explore it."

Once more he went to work with the chart, trying to get the exact location of the sunken pirate.

In this he soon succeeded.

The Lance hovered over what was believed to be the exact spot, and then was allowed to sink.

As she went down slowly, Barney carefully watched for the bottom.

Suddenly he cried:

"Howld on, sor. Thirty-five fathoms, and I kin see the bottom about five fathoms more, sor."

Frank held the Lance here suspended.

At that height it was easy to send searching rays of the flashlight out through the ocean depths.

And the young inventor, with something like a thrill, proceeded to take a look at the vicinity.

It was a critical moment, and was to tell whether or not they had hit upon the location of the wreck.

And, as the searchlight's powerful focus went gleaming through the water, Frank suddenly caught sight of a huge object, dimly visible.

It might have been a ledge of rock, or a coral reef, or a vast formation of sea-weed. He could not tell at the distance.

So he brought the Lance nearer the object.

A great cry burst from Barney.

"Whurroo! Shure it's there, Misther Frank. It's the sunken pirate!"

Sure enough, the rotting hulk of a sunken vessel, half buried in the sand, was seen.

That it was the Diablo was probable, though, of course, it might not be. Frank brought the Lance within a dozen yards of it.

Time and the action of the water had reduced the wreck greatly. There was not a vestige of the rigging left.

The whole affair was dilapidated and ready to crumble with the touch. Seaweed choked the once sullen ports, and all kinds of marine animals swam in and out of them.

For some moments the voyagers stood looking at the wreck.

It was a type of ancient galley, after the Spanish pattern. The muzzles of cannon could be seen peeping from her sides.

That it was the Diablo there was little doubt.

The sunken pirate was found. The next thing was to recover the treasure.

The Lance was securely anchored, and all her lights turned full and fair upon the wreck.

Then Frank and Barney and Dick donned diving-suits.

They equipped themselves with the necessary tools to board the craft with. Then they sallied forth.

The pressure on the helmets in forty fathoms of water was for a time quite severe. But they soon got used to it.

Pomp remained aboard to look after things here. He stationed himself at the plate glass window and watched his friends with interest.

It was but a few moments' work to cover the short distance from the Lance to the sunken wreck.

Then the three divers clambered up the vessel's side and over the rail.

In sinking the galley had not tilted to one side, but sat level on her keel in the sand.

So the explorers were enabled to walk a level deck and reached the companionway without accident.

There was nothing of interest to be seen on the deck.

Seaweed was thickly matted over everything. The gun

carriages and overturned guns were alone evidences of the terrific battle which had taken place upon the ship's deck.

Down the companionway stairs the three divers cautiously went.

They were exceedingly rotten, but still did not fall.

Then the party entered the cabin.

The electric lights upon their helmets made the interior reasonably plain.

But the sight which rewarded their gaze was a hideous one, and fully indicative of the awful strife which had resulted in the sinking of the ship.

Upon the cabin floor lay a long line of skeletons. The flesh had long since been cleaned from the bones by marine creatures.

The skeletons were in such regular form that Frank concluded that they were pirates wounded in the fight and brought down here for surgical treatment.

What bore this out was a collection of glass bottles on the table. There had evidently been instruments there also, such as surgeons use, for their impression was seen, but rust had long since consumed them.

Truly the scene in the cabin was a dreadful one.

Our divers were fain to pass it by and went out into the forward hold.

Here they found the powder magazine and a heap of what had once been powder still there.

Over the threshold lay a skeleton, probably that of some unfortunate powder monkey.

What Frank was thinking of, however, was the treasure.

In what part of the ship would it be found? This it was not easy to guess.

From one part to another the explorers went.

In places the deck had rotted and caved in. Every step made the old hulk quiver.

It was necessary to proceed with the greatest of caution, for if the wreck should collapse it would mean death to the divers.

The search for the treasure-chamber was continued for some time, without any better success.

Then Dick remembered a section beyond the powder magazine where a room could exist.

He conveyed this theory to Frank by putting their helmets together and talking.

Back to the magazine all went.

And here, by searching in the partition, sure enough Dick found a small knob. He pressed on it.

But the lock had rusted. However, the door fell in and revealed a square chamber.

And as the electric helmet lamps illuminated this place, an astounding sight was beheld.

There were no chests of gold and diamonds, as tradition credits to the average pirate. Instead there were great piles of gold doubloons and ducats all piled up with care. Certainly the three explorers had never seen the equal of the spectacle before.

A mighty fortune it all represented.

Several millions in gold were piled in that apartment. For some time not one of the party moved.

Then Frank took up a handful of the money and made a motion to the others that they would return to the Lance.

This was for the purpose of organizing a system of transportation of the gold from the sunken wreck to the hold of the Lance.

This was an operation which would be slow indeed.

But the pay would be ample.

A day's work would repay them with millions. Surely this was recompense enough.

Frank found an open port just opposite the treasure-chamber. It was arranged that the gold should be stored in bags, passed out of the port, and thence on to the vestibule of the Lance.

All went on deck again and quickly clambered down the side of the Diablo.

It did not take long to once more get aboard the Lance. Once with their helmets removed in the cabin of the submarine boat the excited treasure hunters could talk.

"Mercy on us!" cried Dick Boomer. "You will be the richest man in your part of the country with all that wealth."

"Ah, but I do not claim it all!" said Frank, quietly.

"What?"

"You heard what I said."

"You don't mean to take it all?"

"Certainly not. There shall be a fair division for all." Boomer was for a moment speechless.

"Great guns!" he finally gasped. "Do you mean to say that I am to have a share of that wealth?"

"Why, certainly; so will Barney and Pomp. I am not a hog. I don't want it all."

The young reporter was deeply affected.

"Well, that is generous," he exclaimed. "What will the boys in the home office say? Why, I can buy a newspaper to beat the News Grabber. Hurrah! I am in luck!"

But Frank knew the need of haste in transporting the treasure.

Arrangements were quickly made. Then a return was

made to the wreck. The work of recovering the gold was begun.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DIVING-BELL.

The plan was for Barney to remain in the hold and pass the bags of coin as fast as he could fill them out of the port to Boomer below.

He would then pass them to Frank, and the latter would take them to the deck of the Lance.

It was slow and laborious work, but very good headway was made. The packing of the gold in the bags was the hardest part of the work.

Perhaps a fifth of the treasure had been removed when the chemicals in the generators began to fail.

It was necessary to return to the Lance to have these restored. So the task was temporarily abandoned.

Barney climbed out of the Diablo's hold, and Frank and Dick with him returned to the submarine boat.

Once on board the helmets were removed, and good air was once again breathed.

All were more or less exhausted with the fearful pressure, and the exertion in such unnatural atmosphere which had caused the blood to bear heavily upon the brain.

Dick was particularly affected, for it was a new thing to him.

Yet he was as eager as ever to continue the work.

"How much of the treasure have we brought away, Frank?" he asked.

"I hardly know," replied the young inventor. "Perhaps half a million."

"Hurrah! That is a snug fortune in itself. Equally divided we would all have a comfortable sum. But we must recover the rest."

"Certainly."

But an incident occurred at this moment which was the first in a long train of such.

Just over the pilot-house there was a dial and indicator. Connected with it was a very sensitive metal plate, electrified. If any undue commotion in the surface of the sea above occurred within a radius of half a mile this electric indicator recorded it.

Barney saw that the indicator recorded a great disturbance.

"Shure, Misther Frank," he cried, "something unusual is going on above us, sor!"

"What is that?" cried Frank.

Barney pointed to the indicator.

Frank saw that the hand was up to a high figure. He at once guessed the reason.

"There is some large body over us," he declared. "Probably it is the schooner."

"The schooner!" gasped Dick.

"Yes."

"Well—is—is there any danger?"

"I think not," said Frank. "It is likely that they may come down here, though, in their diving-bell."

In spite of the impression that the Spaniards could do them no harm, none of the gold hunters felt just easy.

While Frank was busy with the chemicals, the others watched to see what might be done by the Spaniards.

They were not long left in doubt.

A dark body was suddenly seen to descend quite near the wreck. It hung suspended just above it.

It was seen in the glare of the searchlight to be the diving-bell.

Four men were in it with divers' suits on.

In the middle of the bell there was a platform. Upon this the men sat, and between them there was an air-pump.

Had the Spaniards gone to work at once recovering the gold the young inventor would really have felt almost inclined to divide with them.

But they did not.

Seeing the submarine boat, they did not venture to descend to the deck of the wreck.

Perhaps they feared a collision with the boat under water.

It would have been an easy matter for Frank to have cut their life lines and thus drowned the whole of them. But he was averse to thus taking human life.

The pirates did not dare to venture down upon the Dia-blo's deck.

On the contrary, they did the very thing which they ought not to have done, and this was assume the aggressive toward their more powerful neighbor.

Frank had restored the chemicals in the generators, and now with Barney and Dick went forth.

"The sunken gold is the property of him who recovers it," Frank declared. "They have no more right to it than we have."

The Spaniards sat in the diving-bell above and watched the three men below.

They seemed surprised that they could travel about without life lines.

Frank and Barney reached the wreck, and Barney climbed into the port.

Then all three began once more the work of transporting the treasure without giving heed to the Spaniards.

As the bags of coin were passed out and to the deck of the Lance, the Spanish divers watched them for some while with interest.

They were very angry, and rushing to the rail, shook their fists madly at Frank Reade, Jr.

The crew of the Lance did not heed this, but continued to pass the bags of coins when the Spaniards made an attack upon Frank.

One of them hurled a hatchet at the young inventor.

It struck Frank's helmet and glanced off. It knocked the young inventor down with the fearful concussion.

He lay half senseless for a moment upon the sands.

Had the hatchet blade cut its way through the helmet it would have been the end of him.

The effect of this attack was thrilling.

With an angry cry Barney sprang upon deck. He did not attempt to strike the Spaniard. He could have finished him easily by gashing his suit with a knife.

But he instead grasped the life line and shut off the villain's supply of air.

He had reduced the fellow to insensibility before the companion could attack Barney.

Then the brave Celt was in danger of his life.

The other Spaniard made a blow at Barney with his hatchet. But just in time the Celt caught his arm.

Then followed a brief and terrible wrestle. The Celt had a little the best of it, for he had no life line to contend with.

His one purpose was to get hold of the other's life line. This he did, and in a few seconds had reduced him to insensibility.

Meanwhile the other diver had been drawn up into the bell. The moment Barney relaxed his hold upon his adversary he was also drawn up.

The deck of the sunken vessel now became an untenable position. The Spaniards above began to hurl their weapons and tools at Barney.

The Celt saw that Frank had recovered, and was making signs to him. At once he slid over the rail.

Fortunately none of the missiles struck him. In a few moments, with Frank and Dick, he was aboard the Lance.

Frank was weak and faint from his experience, and Barney and Dick were angry.

The Spaniards in the diving-bell had removed the helmets of their companions, whom Barney had partly suffocated, and these were now regaining their consciousness.

Much valuable time was being lost for them.

The diving-bell could not hope to remain under water such an extended length of time. The Lance could remain for days.

Suddenly the bell was seen to go up to the surface.

It disappeared from view, and Frank cried :

"Hurrah! What did I tell you? The rascals will give it up for a bad job. We shall win a bloodless victory!"

But Dick Boomer was not sanguine.

"Don't be so sure!" he cried. "I tell you they are up to some new trick!"

"Do you believe it?"

"I do."

"What can they do to harm us now?"

"More than you will believe possible. They do not intend to give up all that gold, you may be quite sure."

Frank was thoughtful. He could not help but see that there was a great deal of logic in Dick's remarks.

"All right," he cried, finally. "We will see what the villains are doing."

He stepped into the pilot-house.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dick, in surprise.

"I am going to the surface."

"What for?"

"To make sure that the Spaniards are not trying any new game on us."

"But—"

"Well, what?"

"I hope you will not think me a chronic kicker, Frank."

"By no means," said Frank, with a laugh; "only a great objector."

"Good!"

Dick said no more. All his objections had been overruled, and he was silent. Frank elevated the Lance for a couple of fathoms, and then sent it forward slowly.

Full half a mile was covered thus. Then he pressed the pneumatic lever and the submarine boat sprang to the surface.

Up she went and sprang into daylight.

The sun was long past the meridian, though the sky was cloudless and the sea in almost a calm.

The schooner was seen making her way slowly to the island with the diving-bell and the raft in tow.

It looked as if Romero had abandoned his attempt to recover the sunken treasure.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick; "we've scared them out of it!" Frank was astonished.

"It means that the treasure is ours to recover now without any further trouble," cried Dick, joyfully.

"Let us go back and to work, then," cried Frank. "It will take us two days' hard work to shift it to the Lance."

"You're right," agreed Dick. "Here goes for luck!"

The submarine boat started for the spot where the wreck lay once more.

Just over it, it once more went down. Anchorage was made in about the same place.

No time was wasted.

The three divers donned their suits and left the Lance.

It was but a few moments' work to once more get underway. But yet progress was slow.

The trio worked until it became necessary to once more return to the boat and refresh the generators.

Then, as Dick puffed and panted in the fresh air of the cabin, he asked :

"Well, Frank, how much have we got on board now?"

"Fully three quarters of a million," replied the young inventor.

"Whew!" cried the young reporter, ecstatically. "If that is evenly divided, there will be nearly two hundred thousand apiece. Quite a snug fortune."

"Well, yes," agreed Frank; "it is. But how much more do you suppose there is aboard that wreck?"

"A couple of million."

"There is enough for us to have a round million apiece." Dick nearly fainted.

"Jericho!" he gasped. "That is too much of an elevation for a penniless scribe like me."

"I have no doubt you will make good use of the money," said Frank.

Dick's eyes twinkled.

"Well, rather," he replied. "I will never pass a poor man by. I mean to live on the interest, and when I die, the principal, as I have no heirs, shall endow a home for indigent pen scratchers, who are not so lucky as I am."

Everybody laughed at this.

Then the generators once more were announced fit for work, and the three divers went forth once more.

But work had not progressed a great while when Frank saw Pomp beckoning excitedly to him through one of the windows of the Lance.

The darky seemed much excited, and Frank at once went to the partition.

Pomp had taken a look at the sensitive dial on deck, and noted that it was much agitated.

There was some commotion overhead, and the negro thought it best to inform Frank of the fact.

"The schooner returned," thought the inventor. "Well, that will complicate matters. What is up, I wonder?"

Even as the words passed through his mind, another fearful reflection dawned upon him.

Instinctively he turned to signal Barney and Dick.

But at that moment there was a fearful shock. It seemed as if the bottom of the ocean had heaved upward, and everything was flying to pieces.

Frank was hurled he knew not where, and utter darkness was for a time about him.

He saw what caused it. The water was filled with sediment and débris. But this gradually settled, and things about became once more quite plain.

Then slowly everything unfolded itself to view.

And at the same moment a comprehension of all flashed through Frank's mind.

For a moment he was appalled and quite overcome. He looked about for the Lance. It was not in sight.

What had become of it?

Had it been destroyed? The young inventor's blood seemed freezing with horror.

It was as if death were already upon him. What should he do to save himself?

Alone at the bottom of the sea, fully forty fathoms from the surface, with scarce half an hour of life before him!

In that length of time the chemicals in his helmet must exhaust themselves and he would die!

"Oh, God!" he moaned. "How awful! Must I die thus?"

Then a set hard feeling came into his heart. It was a motive of hatred and revenge.

"It is the murderous work of Romero," he muttered. "He dropped a torpedo down upon us from above. Curse him! What a soft fool I was that I did not kill him when I had him at my mercy?"

He saw at once his mistake.

It had been misplaced mercy to spare the life of the wretch. But it was now too late. He must die a dreadful death in consequence of his error.

But yet he would not give up without at least an effort. He tried to remember how far it was to the island and what direction to take. If he could make his way thither possibly he might get out of the water in time to save himself.

But he remembered that it was fully a mile, and very difficult for him to locate without any point of the compass to guide him.

However, he would make the attempt.

He arose and felt his way along for a short distance. This brought him once more to the wreck of the Diablo.

But it was now utterly a wreck. Only a heap of rattling timber was left. The torpedo had blown it into fragments.

The balance of the treasure must lie under that moldering pile. But it might lie there for all time. Frank Reade, Jr., felt that he would never touch it again.

He looked about for the wreck of the Lance.

But he could not see it. Never mind, it had doubtless been blown some distance away.

Then he recalled the fact that he had companions with him at the time. They were Barney and Dick.

And even as he thought of them, something moved under the heap of debris, and a human form crawled forth.

It was Barney.

How the Celt had escaped death was a living mystery. It was nothing short of a miracle.

He had been in the Diablo's hold when the torpedo had exploded.

After that he was conscious only of falling timbers about him. Then he lay stunned by the explosion.

When he came to, he crawled out from under a heap of timbers. Staggering to his feet he was face to face with Frank Reade, Jr.

In their joy at sight of each other, the two men embraced.

With his helmet close to Barney's, Frank shouted:

"Great heavens! How did you get out of that alive?"

"Shure, sor, an' I niver kin tell," replied Barney. "Phwativer happened?"

"I think the pirates dropped a torpedo upon us."

"The spalpeens! Shure, they mean to murther us intoirely."

"If I escape this time, and have the chance, I will not spare them again."

Dick Boomer then loomed up in front of them.

The young reporter had been thrown heavily by the explosion, and had lain senseless for some time.

Coming to, he had wandered about at random. By great good luck he had chanced to see Frank and Barney.

Then the three men started to travel over the ocean bed.

It was slow, toilsome work, for they, as all divers do, carried heavy leaden soles on their shoes.

It seemed as if they had been journeying for hours. The island was as far off as ever.

Frank was convinced that they had taken the wrong direction.

Suddenly the plain began to slope downward. The depths were awful and dark.

To go down there was out of the question. What was to be done?

Suddenly they found their course terminated in an abrupt and strange manner. They came to the brink of a mighty sheer descent.

Below was a chasm hundreds of feet deep. How awful it would have been to have walked over that verge!

The pressure at that depth would have burst their brains. Upon the brink of this awful, echoless depth the three lost divers paused, overcome with despair.

They sank down in the white sand and gave themselves up to die.

It did not seem as if it was worth while to struggle for life further. Death was too certain.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EARTHQUAKE—THE END.

Suddenly there was a strange quivering of the water. The agitation was so strange and awful that all three started from their lethargy.

Then the ground began to tremble, and there was a distant, thunderous roar.

For a moment the trio of divers fancied that they were being rocked in a cradle. Then there was a tremendous crash and thunderous roar, and they knew that far above the waters were in a turmoil.

They put their helmets together.

"For Heaven's sake! What was that?" cried Dick.

"Bejabers, it's a hurricane!" said Barney.

But Frank said:

"It is an earthquake! What shall we have next?"

And then, like a revelation, a flood of brilliant light burst over them all.

They started up and beheld an astounding sight.

Across the mighty deep valley, from the blackness, there advanced an apparition which set them wild with joy.

It was the submarine boat!

For a moment they were frantic for fear that Pomp would not see them.

But he did, and bore down quickly. It is needless to say that they were quickly on board.

It seemed that with the bursting of the torpedo, which had struck near the Diablo, the Lance had received a terrific shock.

The concussion had thrown open the propeller valve, and instantly the boat shot away at lightning speed.

She ran with the speed of the wind for fully a dozen miles before Pomp could adjust the deranged machinery and stop her.

The darky, of course, was alarmed for the safety of his friends, and started back post-haste.

As it happened, he had arrived none too soon. Frank found upon examination that the chemicals had nigh exhausted themselves, and the party would have suffocated ten minutes later.

The joy of all cannot be expressed in words.

But the greatest surprise was in store. Upon returning to find the wreck of the Diablo, only a mighty chasm was found into which the wreck had been drawn to unknown depths.

To descend after it was out of the question. The earthquake had cut the bed of the ocean in the vicinity into various deep rents.

The balance of the treasure was forever beyond the reach of man.

"Never mind!" cried Dick Boomer, enthusiastically; "we are all rich enough now, anyway."

The others agreed with him.

And now we reach the conclusion of our tale of the sunken pirate. Upon rising to the surface with the Lance, our submarine voyagers were given a great start of surprise.

The earthquake had created a tidal wave. This had carried the Manola upon the rocks of the island, and there she lay a helpless wreck.

No effort was made, of course, to rescue her crew.

They were left alone in their misery, and the Lance returned to Readestown. The voyagers received an ovation upon reaching home.

Dick Boomer made all his colleagues on Newspaper Row mad with envy upon his return. He is yet enjoying his fortune in his own peculiar way.

Barney and Pomp remained in Readestown. Upon the arrival home, Frank found that the Lance had been so badly wrenched by her experiences that she would never be of service again.

So he condemned her, and she was destroyed, but he at once proceeded to execute the designs of a new and even more wonderful invention.

THE END.

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